

# *Fisher's Of (Young) Men*

*When Jesus called Peter, He said, "Come follow me and I will make you fisher's of men." Today we will look at ways to disciple boys to meet Jesus' request to be fishers of men, young men.*

## *INTRO - (10 Minutes)*

### A. Greeting & Introduction.

Greet everyone and introduce myself. Then ask everyone to introduce themselves and state what role they have in AWANA (take notes).

### B. Opening Prayer

In looking at being a Fisher of Young Men, meaning discipling our young men, I realized this is a six step process. The steps we will look at this evening are:

1. We have to define what it means to disciple and what a discipler is.
2. They need to be present to disciple, in other words, you cannot disciple someone who is not there.
3. Before you can disciple, you need to gain their trust and respect, else you will be spinning your wheels.
4. Extra-Curricular Involvement is essential.
5. There will be obstacles and we need to overcome them.
6. As we disciple, it must be dynamic, we need to make this worthwhile,

### D. After we look at these steps, we will have time for some questions and Answers; however, please feel free to interject your thoughts and questions as we go through this. I really want this to be an interactive experience. Also, if we have not ran out of time, I'd like to know what your club is doing to make fisher's of your young men.

## *MAIN PRESENTATION - (20 Minutes)*

1. Step 1: We have to define what it means to disciple and what a discipler is.
  - A. My favorite dictionary -- the Bible, gives at least 29 scripture references to the word disciple and at least 240 times where the word disciples appear. Simply put, a disciple is a follower. Jesus had 12 of them and they spent a great deal of time together. So, that tells me, disciples are important.
  - B. A discipler is someone who disciplines, to do that we must be a leader. 1 Cor 11:1 states "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."
  - C. We need to be guiding these young men just as Jesus guides us. We are Christ's representative to these clubbers and it is critical to mentor them.
2. Now that we have defined what a disciple is and what a discipler is, let's move on to the next step: They need to be present to disciple, in other words, we cannot disciple someone who is not there. There are some things our club must be and some things we must be in order to attract and keep these young fisher's of men. Let's first look at our clubs.
  - A. The clubs need to be organized. If a clubber sees chaos or disorganization, it is going to be difficult to keep them there. They will become disinterested and will not want to participate or learn scripture. Some other elements the club need to have are:
  - B. Exciting. Let's face it, you don't want to do something that is boring (unless you have to or are getting paid for it). If we have a choice, we are going to want to do something exciting. Do you voluntarily go to boring movies or boring sporting events? Do you read boring literature? I find it hard enough to read exciting books much less boring stuff.
  - C. Our clubs also need to be fun. This goes hand-in-hand with exciting. If you give rewards to your clubbers for reaching certain milestones, as economically as possible, make the rewards fun. Find out what they like and appeal to that. For games, keep them as fun as possible. Council times can be fun as well. We have a person who every year gives a message on "Twinky Theology" correlating the protection that additives

give the Twinkie to the protection that Jesus and the Holy Spirit give us. He even sets one of them on fire and the amazing thing is that it doesn't burn up. The kids are riveted while learning about how Jesus' protection can help keep us from getting burned.

- D. Lastly, our club needs to be competitive (to a degree). By rewarding them for accomplishing certain goals, we are showing them healthy ways to being competitive. Also, in our games, there are winners, but what's important is good sportsmanship. This is another area where we show them the value and importance of healthy, Christian competition. This keeps them from becoming bored and complacent.
3. This leads us to our next step: Before you can disciple them, you need to gain their trust and respect, or else you will be spinning your wheels. We could have the most organized, exciting, fun, and Spiritually competitive club in Colorado, but if we don't gain their trust and respect we will not be able to reach down into them to work with them to teach/train them in the ways of being a disciple and to grow in discipleship. There are many different ways to gain their trust and respect. I'd like to touch on four of them.
- A. Treat them like a friend, not like a "baby." When Jesus called the 12, He came down to their level. He did not make them elevate to His level. When we try to relate to them on their level, understanding them for who they are and what they might be going through, you have a much better chance at "winning them over" than if you speak to them as if they were an adult. I am not meaning to be buddy-buddy with them, but to show them that you care for them and are genuinely interested in what's going on in their life. This will help break down any walls that might exist.
  - B. Sometimes it might be difficult to build a relationship during handbook time or council time. Game time is an excellent opportunity to begin to grow your relationship with them in Jesus. When you aren't afraid to run around with them and encourage them, it sends them a clear message that you are interested and care. You will also have more time here to do some one-on-one work with them. Have fun with them, don't just stand there (or sit on the floor). "Get in the game."
  - C. Show a sincere interest in their lives demonstrates a true heart of caring. It will warm them up when you remember things they say to you. When you remember a concern they shared with you the week before

and you ask them how it turned out, this really touches them. I believe children appreciate sincerity from us as we do from each other. Don't you want people to be sincere with you? Children are no different in this category. They want us to be real, especially when it comes to matters of their heart.

- D. The last point is to try to really understand where they are coming from. When they are speaking to you, give them your full attention. If you can relate from a situation in your own life when you were their age, share that with them. If they talk to you about how they are being picked on when they are in school, and you were, tell them that. This will give them the knowledge that you really do know where they are coming from. One of the reasons I believe that the Bible mentions how Jesus was beaten, whipped, spit on, and abandoned, was so that I would know he understands when I am mistreated. Any mistreatment I may have ever experienced cannot come close to what He went through and by me knowing that, I KNOW he understands where I am coming from.

The step I just went through shows you ways of relaying to them during club time, but that isn't the only time we can relay to them and help them in becoming fisher's of young men. In our next step we will see ways outside of club time that we can utilize to help them in their growth and development.

#### 4. Step 4 – Going that extra mile (extra-curricular involvement) is essential!

- A. I believe clubbers are really touched when they are reached out to outside of club time. When they are absent, give them a call. Let them know that they were missed and see if there is anything you could be praying for them for. Ask them if everything is okay. Invite them to call you to do sections over the phone with you if they are going to be away from club for whatever reason. When you truly avail yourself to someone, the seeds of faith and trust will grow.
- B. Get to club early enough to spend some time with them before club starts and hang around for a bit after club until all the clubbers have been picked up. These are great times to have a short visit with them to encourage them and see if there is anything on their mind or their hearts. Be there to greet them when they arrive. This helps make them feel special and going the extra step will pay dividends down the road.
- C. Have you ever had a clubber stop coming and when you called them or

saw them at Church and related that you have missed them being at club, they said that they haven't been there because of transportation issues? Well, if so, then work to make arrangements to give them a ride. Find out where they live and see if other clubbers or another leader if not you live nearby them that could give them a ride to and from club. That would be huge and would at a minimum take away not having a ride as an excuse for not coming to club. Last year, one of our T&T boys stopped coming to club. I know him and his mom very well. It's a single parent situation. I saw the mom and asked her why Ian wasn't coming to club. She said that she changed jobs and was at work during club. She said she was taking him with her to work. I asked her if we could come and get him and she said that would be great. His leader was close to where she worked and went to get him to bring him to club and it meant a great deal to the boy. I could see how much it meant to Ian that someone was coming to get him. He did well in club last year.

- D. If you are a handbook leader, how about a visit to the clubber's home? I bet the clubber would think it was awesome if his leader showed up to meet his family. This added extra touch will only benefit your relationship with him during club time. But remember, don't just show up and do some homework first. If there are stressors or difficulty at home, be very careful with this. The last thing you want the child's parent(s) to think is that you are "checking up on them." Lay the ground work by praying and calling the parents first. Make sure they are on board with this first.
- E. Finally, do some fun things together. Last year, we had our handbook groups in color teams (blue, green, red, and yellow). There was friendly competition between the groups and at different times, we did an above and beyond event to recognize those groups who were excelling. The handbook leader participated in this as well. One of the events was we took the top handbook group from each color group wall-climbing. Their leaders came with us and one of them even climbed the wall. The look on the kids faces when he reached the top was priceless and I know that he did some bonding with them that would have never happened that Saturday morning if he would have stayed home and never participated. Besides rewards, we also did other events with the group as a whole that helped us spend time with them to help them in their spiritual growth and development. We had a few Friday night Ice-Cream social/verse make up/movie nights. We signed out part of the Church

building and had them bring their books. We had them do two sections (unless they were doing a review or had a particularly difficult section), then they could have ice-cream floats, snacks and play games. After a while, we would put in a movie for them. During the entire process, leaders were interacting with the clubbers, showing them that they were willing to give up a Friday night to be with these guys. I know it meant a great deal to the boys. Why? Because they told me. There were parents who would come up on Sunday (our club in on Sunday) and tell me how much their child enjoyed Friday night and they hope there are more. We also had our first ever, late September, overnight Father-son & leaders campout. It was a smashing success. We played games, had hotdogs over the fire, smores, told stories around the campfire and just had an excellent evening/night of fellowship and sharing.

F. Now that you have heard some extra-curricular ideas from me, what are some, if any, that your club is doing? Would you like to share any of them with us? How about any success stories that might have come from an extra curricular event? Give some time here for sharing.

5. Step 5. That was great. Thanks for sharing. Now, we know that everything just doesn't come with the greatest of ease. These events and participation just don't fall out of the sky. They take a lot of work, and they don't always flow smoothly. Often times there are obstacles that have to be overcome. There are three obstacles that I would like to touch on. I'm sure there are more, but these I wanted to highlight.

A. Attacks from the enemy. I choose this one first because the solution to this one as well as part of the solution to the other three is prayer! This obstacle can only be overcome by prayer and perseverance. If you seek God's will when planning activities and believe you have His blessing, then He will take care of you, but you have to ask. When little bumps in the road arise, just take a minute to pray and praise God for testing you in this way. If it is an apparent attack from the enemy, bind him in the name and blood of our Lord Jesus. The enemy is not going to sit back and let us make fishers of these young men. He and his demons are going to try to trip things up. Put them in their place by prayer and calling on the power of Jesus. He won't let you down.

B. The next obstacle I want to mention is the "I don't have time" response from parents and other leaders. Encourage your leaders and parents to help. One way is to plan out the year's extra-curricular activities for the

year. Then, take the number of activities and determine the total number of leaders/parents you will need. Let's say you are going to have one overnight campout needing 10 people, three ice-cream socials needing 5 people each (total 15), a bowling event needing 4 people, and a rock-climbing event needing 4 people. That gives you a grand total of 33 people. If you have 11 leaders, see if they can commit to 2 activities during the year and get 11 parents to help. Remember, though, if you get more than you need, count your blessings! This equation might seem challenging, but the point is to spread the wealth. Most places have the tendency to use the same people over and over. Recruit most help. Don't just ask for volunteer's, contact them one-on-one, especially the parents. A good deal of parent's won't volunteer, but if you ask them to help with one activity during the year, they just might. Schedule the events far enough in advance to allow leaders and parents to mark their calendars far enough ahead so as to not have a conflict. If you wait until 2 or 3 weeks before the event to solicit volunteers, many of them might already have something scheduled for that night.

C. Our third obstacle is one that is easily fixed. Some parents won't let their children participate in extra-curricular events because they are suspicious. Some parents new to AWANA might question what is really going on at these ice-cream socials, especially if they have been "burned" at previous events. The easy fix --- invite them to come and observe (a back-door way to get them to help). Once they are there, invite them to participate or help if they would like. Encourage them to ask questions. Always maintain an open door policy, be encouraging. You never know, they might have had a horrible experience in the past and are very nervous. I knew a family who had one child and they were very leery about letting her attend events because she went to a sleep over once at a house where the environment was supposed to be very safe and she ended up getting assaulted. This was tragic and took a long, long time for the family to process.

6. Step 6. Our final step, as we disciple, it must be dynamic, we need to make this worthwhile.

A. Encourage handbook achievements and reward them. Whether is something small or just a high five in front of all of the other clubbers. Recognize their accomplishments. This will impress on them the value of memorizing their verses.

- B. Use situations to teach as Jesus did. Show compassion and love in your words and actions. Draw on examples from the Bible to reinforce to the children that they are doing well.
- C. Pray together. Your handbook should always open in prayer. Pray with the other leaders. Pray as often as you can. Prayer is the key to success!
- D. And finally, model Jesus in everything you do. These clubbers are smart and they are watching you. You are helping God to mold them into fisher's of young men. Remember the value of leading by example and what better example for us to follow than that of Jesus. He loved children and demonstrated that in His Word. Let's follow His example and love these guys as we help them grow and develop into mighty fishers of men!

### *CLOSING - (10 Minutes)*

- A. Question and Answer time.
- B. Have you had a time when you wanted to do something but didn't have the support? What did you end up doing? Did you have a positive result? If so, would you share the circumstances?
- C. Have you had a situation where you could not tell if you were reaching the clubbers or not? What did you end up doing?
- D. Closing Prayer